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ABSTRACT

Although it has been suggested that an understanding of shyness may come from a better understanding of social anxiety, there is no hard evidence that shy people are in fact socially anxious. To explore the link between shyness and social anxiety, a 297-item questionnaire was administered to 302 college students. Analysis of the 100 questionnaire items related to shyness and social anxiety yielded 21 factors, with five factors accounting for 46 percent of the total variance. The data suggested that timidity, audience anxiety, and interpersonal anxiety are separate, distinguishable constructs. Shyness was more closely linked to timidity than to interaction anxiety and had relatively little to do with audience anxiety or stagefright. The results also suggested that some shy subjects are both timid and anxious, others are timid but not anxious, and still other shy subjects are anxious but not timid. These data suggest caution in linking shyness and interaction anxiety too closely. Researchers should use the term shyness to refer only to social inhibition or timidity, and resist the temptation shown by some subjects to call themselves shy when they mean they are simply socially anxious. Questionnaire items dealing with each variable are included. (JAC)

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Shyness and Social Anxiety

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To me, one of the most interesting things about being involved in the very early stages of research into shyness has been watching the concept of "shyness" slowly take shape. Just six years ago Phil Zimbardo wrote that "Shyness is a fuzzy concept; the closer we look, the more varieties we discover....No single definition can be adequate, because shyness means different things to different people." (Zimbardo, 1977, pp. 23-24) Two years later Crozier wrote that " (shyness) can refer to social anxiety, to lack of poise, to modest reserve, or to introversion....(to) reticence, self-consciousness, non-assertiveness, audience sensitivity, communication apprehensiveness, social skills defects, and embarrassability" (Crozier, 1979, p. 48). This has since come to be known as the "kitchen sink" concept of shyness....

Despite that inauspicious start, researchers in the last few years have begun to move toward a definition of shyness as anxious inhibition in social situations. According to this view, the shy person feels tense, nervous, and anxious around other people, and (perhaps as a result) tends to be inhibited or timid, to avoid getting into conversations, to stay in the background at parties or other social functions. Now the idea that shyness is related somewhat to social anxiety has a long history in the literature as Crozier (1979, 1982) has shown. But recently Buss (1980) has suggested that shyness is actually a form of social anxiety. This has led Leary (1982) to ask: if shyness is the same thing as what he calls "interpersonal anxiety," why do we need to call it "shyness" at all? He writes "...it might be best for researchers.... to abandon the construct of shyness in favor of others that precisely refer either to anxiety or behavior" (Leary, 1982, p. 5).

This is more than a matter of labelling, however. A great deal of theorizing about shyness is based on the presumed relationship of shyness and social anxiety. It is suggested that in part at least an understanding of shyness may come from a greater understanding of social anxiety. Yet there is virtually no hard evidence that shy people are in fact socially anxious! Though some correlation between shyness and social anxiety have been reported in the literature (e.g. Pilkonis, 1977; Crozier, 1979; Leary, 1983), on closer examination it turns out that either the shyness scales used were laced with social anxiety questions or the social anxiety scales were measuring things other than social anxiety. As a result we simply do not know in fact whether social anxiety is an important aspect of shyness, or whether perhaps shyness is simply the same thing as social anxiety but masquerading under a different label.

In an effort to explore the link between shyness and social anxiety, I collected 100 questionnaire items that concerned shyness and various kinds of social anxiety. The social anxiety scales of Fenigstein et al (1975) and Leary (1983) were included, as was the shyness scale created by Cheek & Buss (1981). In addition, I included a number of questions about shyness and social behavior that were unique to this study. These questions were embedded in a 297-item questionnaire administered to 302 college students available through the psychology subject pool. Least squares principle axis factor analysis of the 100 questions yielded 21 factors; inspection of the eigenvalues suggested

that five factors (accounting for 46% of the total variance) should be rotated to a varimax solution. The rotated factors are shown in the attached tables.

I have labelled the first factor "timidity." Virtually all of the items that load heavily on this factor concern taking the initiative in social situations: livening up a party, initiating conversations, introducing oneself to others, taking charge in groups, and so on. Dixon et. al. (1957) found a similar factor in a study of psychiatric patients and also called it "social timidity." Note that several "shyness" questions loaded heavily on this factor, suggesting that for these Ss timidity is in some way closely linked to shyness. Note also the conspicuous absence of any items concerning anxiety or fearfulness or tension in social interaction. These Ss do not consider anxiety or fear or nervousness to be an important aspect of being timid in interpersonal situations. Timidity is a matter of what one does (or does not do), not how one feels in social situations.

The second and third factors to emerge are clearly both aspects of social anxiety. They match Leary's division of social anxiety into "audience anxiety" or stagefright, on the one hand, and what he calls "interaction anxiety" on the other. Factor II concerns anxiety in formal audience situations (giving a speech or making a formal presentation) while Factor III concerns anxiety in more face-to-face encounters (conversations, parties, get-togethers and the like). Note that questions about "shyness" do not appear among the items that loaded most heavily on either social anxiety factor.

Let me skip over the fourth and fifth factors for the moment and summarize. To this point the data show that timidity, audience anxiety, and interpersonal anxiety are separate, distinguishable constructs. Where does shyness fit in to all this? There were six questions in the pool that asked specifically about "shyness." Those six items and their loadings on the three factors are shown on page 3 of the table, as is the correlation between the sum of the six items with Ss' factor scores. It is clear that for these Ss, shyness is more closely linked to timidity than to interaction anxiety (and it has relatively little to do with stagefright or audience anxiety).

But the data on page 3 have an even more interesting tale to tell. Remember that the items are being related to orthogonal factors which are, by design, independent of each other. What the data say is that shyness (the sum of the six items) is closely related to timidity when interaction anxiety is effectively "held constant" -- that is, regardless of social anxiety, shyness scores have nearly 50% of their variance in common with timidity. But, holding timidity constant, shyness scores correlate nearly .50 with interaction anxiety. Since timidity and interaction anxiety factor scores by design do not covary, the conclusion must be that some shy Ss are both timid and anxious, other shy Ss are timid but not particularly anxious, and still other shy Ss are anxious but not particularly timid. If you look at page 4, you will see this effect graphically: I have taken the top 20% of Ss on shyness and plotted their scores on the timidity and interaction anxiety factors. The dotted lines are placed half a standard deviation above the means on both factors to mark off the areas that might be considered fairly high timidity or fairly high interaction anxiety. Notice that for shy Ss who are relatively timid (above the horizontal dashed line) interaction anxiety scores vary widely, including some Ss (in the shaded area at the upper left) who indicate they are not particularly anxious at all around other people. Correspondingly, shy Ss who are relatively anxious (those to the right of the vertical dashed line)

vary greatly in timidity, and a number of these shy, anxious Ss say they really are not particularly timid (in the shaded area at lower right).

What conclusions can be drawn about shyness and social anxiety (particularly interaction anxiety)? First, it is clear that shyness certainly is not simply the same thing as interaction anxiety. It is much more closely related to timidity or social inhibition. It seems to me that most Ss (in this study at least) called themselves shy first if they were timid or inhibited; barring that, a number of Ss called themselves shy anyway if they experienced considerable social anxiety in the presence of other people. Only one-quarter to one-third of the most shy Ss considered themselves as both timid and socially anxious to any appreciable degree.

These data suggest great caution in linking shyness and interaction anxiety too closely together, since at least half of the very shy Ss in this study were not particularly anxious around other people (and on the other hand, many people who were anxious in interpersonal situations did not consider themselves particularly "shy"). Let me leave you with a more radical interpretation of the data: that we as researchers should use the term "shyness" to refer only to social inhibition or timidity (in the sense of failing to take the initiative in social situations), and that we resist the temptation shown by a handful of these Ss to call themselves "shy" when really they mean simply that they are socially anxious. Such a redirection of our research efforts would require relatively "pure" measures of shyness or timidity on the one hand and social anxiety on the other; as a first step I have put together on page 5 of the tables the best eight questionnaire items for each variable ("best" in the sense of low correlations with the other scales), though I believe better scales should be developed as a first order of business.

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ITEMLOADING ON FACTORSI. TIMIDITY (12.4% of variance)

	I	II	III	IV	V
I can usually get some life into a dull party.	-63	-07	-14	02	06
I am probably less shy in social interactions than most people.	-63	-14	-31	01	-14
I am usually a person who initiates conversations.	-62	-13	-21	-28	-27
I consider myself to be a shy person.	61	23	33	10	33
At a party, I do not hesitate to introduce myself to someone who seems interesting.	-58	-07	-22	-26	-09
At a party, I am one of those who keep the jokes and stories going.	-57	-13	-10	11	11
I often find myself taking charge in group situations.	-57	-38	-10	-20	-16
I am usually a person who initiates conversations	-57	-18	-23	-32	-34
I find it easy to make conversation with a stranger.	-56	-19	-15	-41	-33
It does not take me long to overcome my shyness in new situations.	-55	-16	-24	-10	-19
I don't find it hard to talk to strangers.	-55	-14	-11	-29	-30
I often find myself taking charge in small groups.	-55	-22	-02	-20	-11
When standing in a long line I often start up a conversation with someone near me.	-53	00	-11	-28	-25
I am a leader.	-53	-46	-10	-14	-08
I usually feel relaxed around other people, even people who are quite different from me.	-52	-15	-28	-16	-09

II. AUDIENCE ANXIETY (13.5% of variance)

I usually get nervous when I speak in front of a group	18	79	15	08	18
I do not mind speaking in front of a large group of people.	-32	-78	03	-26	-03
I tend to experience "stage fright" when I must appear before a group.	03	77	14	04	17
I feel calm when asked to address a group by giving a speech.	-21	-77	03	-25	01
I would be terrified if I had to appear before a large audience.	09	76	21	08	14
I get nervous when I must make a presentation at school or work.	09	76	31	14	17
I easily become tongue-tied in front of an audience.	-01	73	24	10	11
Before an audience, my voice becomes shaky, quivering, or tense.	04	71	20	04	10
I can speak effectively before large groups of people.	-32	-71	09	-17	04
I wish I did not get so nervous when I speak in front of a group.	09	70	21	07	11
My thoughts become jumbled when I speak before an audience.	04	67	24	09	17
I always avoid speaking in public if possible.	12	65	11	20	14
I am often at a loss for words in front of an audience.	08	65	16	12	12
I get "butterflies" in my stomach when I must speak or perform before others.	-04	64	18	15	27
I can perform well in front of a large audience.	-32	-64	08	-17	13
I enjoy speaking in public.	-40	-62	13	-19	08
I feel anxious when I speak in front of a group.	24	62	09	09	-03

III. INTERACTION ANXIETY (10.1% of variance)

I wish I had more confidence in social situations.	26	15	65	10	16
Parties often make me feel anxious and uncomfortable.	25	09	64	-09	10
I am often uncomfortable at parties and other social functions.	47	03	59	-02	05
I am socially somewhat awkward.	47	14	56	02	07
I feel relaxed when talking to strangers of the opposite sex at parties.	-51	-06	-52	-25	07
I am more shy with members of the opposite sex.	31	00	52	24	-04
I often feel nervous even in casual get-togethers.	24	20	52	01	21
I often feel nervous when talking to an attractive member of the opposite sex.	18	15	51	16	04
I feel inhibited in social situations.	51	09	50	14	19
I often feel lonely.	16	06	50	00	-09
When conversing I worry about saying something dumb.	03	25	50	23	-08
It is hard for me to act natural when I am with new people.	15	12	50	24	28
I often feel nervous when calling someone I don't know very well on the telephone.	08	22	48	26	15
When I move to a new place, it takes me a long time to make new friends.	37	08	47	01	17

IV. ATTENTION (6.1% of variance)

I often voluntarily ask a question in a large class.	-21	-25	02	-67	-16
I am not afraid to voice my opinion, even when I know that it differs from that of the majority.	-13	-26	-06	-57	06
I feel nervous when speaking to someone in authority.	-06	19	31	57	-07
I often voluntarily ask questions in a large group.	-31	-19	10	-56	-03
I feel nervous when I have to speak to authority figures.	08	27	30	53	02
I do not mind making a word slip which causes attention to be drawn to me.	-25	-29	-22	-44	03
A teacher asks questions to which I know the answers but I never raise my hand for fear they might not be what the teacher is looking for.	12	13	24	43	16
I will ask for help from a professor.	-10	-16	-11	-42	-18
I get nervous when I must talk to a teacher or boss.	-19	20	38	42	19

V. RETICENCE (3.7% of variance)

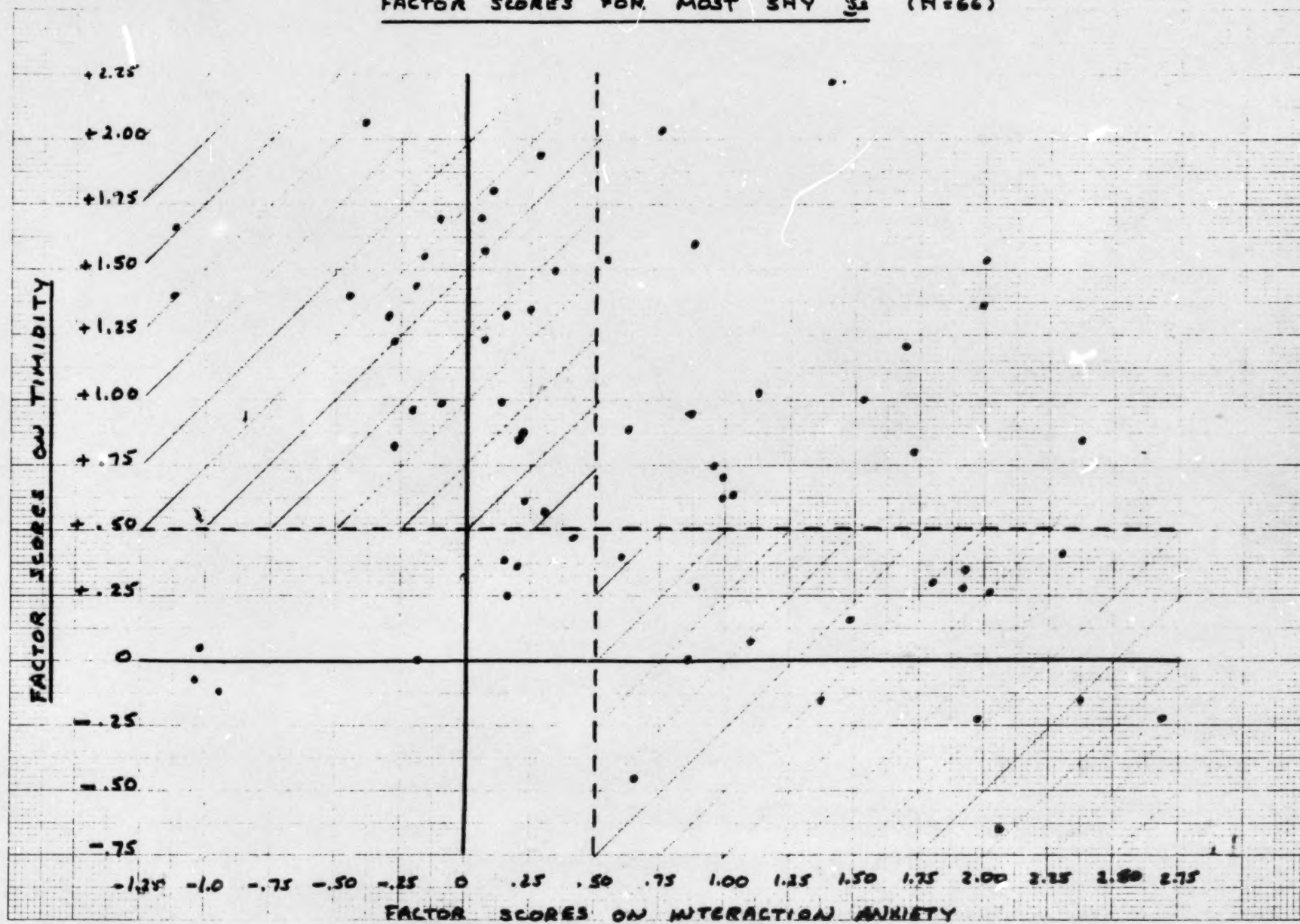
I am more of a listener than a talker.	38	13	06	09	59
I am more of a listener than a talker in conversations.	21	17	07	11	57
I usually don't talk much unless I am with people I know well.	45	19	35	19	44
I am mostly quiet when I am with other people.	40	10	32	-04	40

Shyness Questions Related to Factors

		FACTORS		
		<u>Timidity</u>	<u>Audience Anxiety</u>	<u>Interaction Anxiety</u>
<u>Factor Loading of Each Question</u>				
I am more shy with members of the opposite sex.	31	00	52	
It does not take more long to overcome my shyness in new situations.	-55	-16	-24	
I consider myself to be a shy person.	61	23	33	
It takes me time to overcome my shyness in new situations.	50	17	33	
I am probably less shy in social interactions than most people.	-63	-14	-31	
In general, I am a shy person.	47	26	38	
Correlation of Shyness Sum with Factor Scores (N=277)	68	21	47	

FACTOR SCORES FOR MOST SHY 3 (N=66)

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"Interaction Anxiety" (subset from Leary scale)

- I often feel nervous even in casual get-togethers.
- I get nervous when I must talk to a teacher or boss.
- Parties often make me feel anxious and uncomfortable.
- I sometimes feel tense when talking to people of my own sex if I don't know them very well.
- I wish I had more confidence in social situations.
- I often feel nervous when talking to an attractive member of the opposite sex.
- I often feel nervous when calling someone I don't know very well on the telephone.
- I get nervous when I speak to someone in a position of authority.

"Audience Anxiety" (subset from Leary scale)

- I usually get nervous when I speak in front of a group.
- I tend to experience "stage fright" when I must appear before a group.
- I would be terrified if I had to appear before a large audience.
- I get "butterflies" in my stomach when I must speak or perform before others.
- My thoughts become jumbled when I speak before an audience.
- I don't mind speaking in front of a group if I have rehearsed what I am going to say. (reversed)
- I wish I did not get so nervous when I speak in front of a group.
- I get nervous when I must make a presentation at school or work.

"Timidity" (Shyness?)

- I can usually get some life into a dull party. (reversed)
- I don't find it hard to talk to strangers. (reversed)
- When standing in a long line I often start up a conversation with someone near me. (reversed)
- I often find myself taking charge in small groups. (reversed)
- In a group, I usually take the responsibility for getting people introduced. (reversed)
- At a party, I am one of those who keep the jokes and stories going. (reversed)
- I am a leader. (reversed)
- I am usually a person who initiates conversations. (reversed)